

Message Text

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70

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EA-11 NEA-10 IO-14 ISO-00 ACDA-19 INT-08

SCEM-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

AID-20 EB-11 CIEP-02 TRSE-00 STR-08 OMB-01 C A-02

COME-00 FRB-02 XMB-07 OPIC-12 LAB-06 SIL-01 SAJ-01

DRC-01 /236 W

----- 113864

R 281745Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9495

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USNATO 2706

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION GENEVA

USUN NEW YORK 929

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USIA WASHDC

USINT ALGIERS
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
USCINCEUR

UNCLAS BRUSSELS 7516

E.O. 11652: N/A
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DEPARTMENT PASS USINT CAIRO

SUBJECT: BELGIAN PRESS REACTION TO LIFTING OF ARAB OIL BOYCOTT

REF: BRUSSELS 7494

1. SUMMARY. FIRST REPORTS FROM KUWAIT OF BELGIUM'S ELEVATION TO THE FULL OIL PRIVILEGES OF A "FRIENDLY COUNTRY" WERE GREETED IN PRESS DECEMBER 26 WITH SATISFACTION AND RELIEF BORDERING ON EUPHORIA. SECOND DAY BROUGHT MORE SOBER EMPHASIS ON ABSENCE OF IMMEDIATE EFFECT AND ON NEW PRICES. INITIALLY, PRESS EXPRESSED ONLY PUZZLEMENT OVER REASONS FOR LIFTING OF BOYCOTT FOR BELGIUM ON SECOND DAY PRESS VENTURED SPECULATION ON REASONS FOR SHIFT, MOST OF WHICH EMPHASIZED BROAD FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL REASONS INDEPENDENT OF EITHER BELGIAN OR EUROPEAN POLICIES. ON PAPER, HOWEVER, EXPLICITLY CREDITED FONMIN VAN ELSLANDE FOR HAVING MADE EXPEDIENT GESTURE (NOVEMBER 27 STATEMENT) THAT FURNISHED ARABS WITH CONVENIENT PRETEXT FOR CHANGE IN COURSE WITH RESPECT TO BELGIUM. END SUMMARY.

2. ARAB OIL PRODUCERS' COMMUNIQUE OF DECEMBER 25 WAS GREETED IN BELGIAN PRESS DECEMBER 26 WITH SUCH HEADLINES AS "OUR OIL SUPPLY WILL AGAIN BECOME ALMOST NORMAL" AND, IN CATHOLIC LEFTIST LABOR LA CITE, "BELGIUM WILL GET ALL THE ARAB OIL IT ASKS". NEXT DAY'S PRESS FEATURED MORE CAUTIOUS HEADLINES WARNING " OIL CAN MAKE 1974 EXCESSIVELY EXPENSIVE", " WE MUST TEMPORARILY (SIC) REMAIN SPARING OF OIL", AND "OIL SUPPLIES TO BECOME NORMAL ONLY IN FEBRUARY".

3. PRESS DECEMBER 26 REFLECTED PUZZLEMENT OVER REASONS WHY BELGIUM WAS PROMOTED TO " FRIENDLY COUNTRY".

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LEFTIST CATHOLIC LA CITE CALLED ARAB DECISION "SURPRISING AND PLEASANT". SOCIALIST PARTY EDITORIALIST (FALONY IN LE PEUPLE) CALLED DECISION "IN FACT NOT AT ALL UNEXPECTED", IN VIEW COUNTER-MOVES BY "CAPITALIST COMPANIES" WHICH HAS "MANEUVERED OIL SUPPLIES ON WORLD CHESSBOARD TO DISTRIBUTE AND DIFFUSE THE SHORTAGE". CATHOLIC GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN NOTED ABSENCE OF ARAB EXPLANATION FOR FAVORING BELGIUM AND RECALLED THAT ALTHOUGH ARAB MINISTERS

HAD CALLED VAN ELSLANDE STATEMENT OF NOVEMBER 27 " STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION",
EMISSARIES HAD ALSO SUGGESTED NEED FOR MORE ELOQUENT ACTIONS SUCH AS BREAKING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL OR GIVING MILITARY AID TO ARABS.

4. PRESS BECAME MORE WILLING TO SPECULATE DECEMBER 27.
CATHOLIC LE RAPPEL, WONDERING ABOUT REASON FOR CHANGE IN ARAB ATTITUDE, SAID "NOTHING ON OUR SIDE HAS CHANGED
FUNDAMENTALLY; AT MOST MR. VAN ELSLANDE MADE SOME CONCESSIONS IN DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE OR IF YOU PREFER TO EXPEDIENCY, THUS ALLOWING THE ARABS TO CHANGE THEIR POLICY BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A RATHER THIN PRETEXT".

5. SAME PAPER ADDED: "THE BOYCOTT WAS HAVING THE OPPOSITE EFFECT FROM THAT INTENDED. THE ARAB COUNTRIES THOUGHT BY DEPRIVING EUROPE OF OIL THEY WOULD FORCE EUROPE TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE UNITED STATES. IT IS AMAZING HOW DIPLOMATIS (SUPPOSEDLY) AWARE OF POWER RELATIONSHIPS COULD HAVE BEEN SO MISTAKEN. IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE BEGINNING THAT THEIR DECISION WAS MAKING EUROPE INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT ON THE US"..

6. EUROPEAN UNITY IMPLICATIONS WERE RECOGNIZED IN SOME PAPERS. GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN: "NO ONE KNOWS THE ACTUAL REASONS FOR THIS ALTERED (ARAB) ATTITUDE;
WE SHOULD KEEPIN MIND THAT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FRIENDLY, UNFRIENDLY AND NEUTRAL COUNTRIES IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY SHOULD NOT LEAD TO A WEAKENING OF EUROPEAN UNITY". IN SOCIALIST VOLKSGAZET, EDITORIALIST RIK LENARTS: " THERE IS NO CAUSE TO BE JUBILANT; WHETHER BELGIANS SHOULD FEEL FLATTERED THAT BELGIUM HAS BEEN NAMED A 'FRIENDLY COUNTRY" IS A MATTER FOR INDIVIDUAL DECISION... BUT OPERATION 'DIVISION' AGAINST EUROPE HAS BECOME A COMPLETE SUCCESS FOR THE ARABS, WHO WILL
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CERTAINLY RECEIVE THE CONGRATULATIONS OF THEIR RUSSIAN MASTERS AND INSTIGATORS".

7. IN OTHER PRESS COMMENT, TWO OTHER REASONS ARE
ADVANCED FOR ARAB MOVE:
-- ARABS ARE SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW NOT TO OVERDO IT
AND THUS UNITE THE EUROPEANS;
-- SOME OF THE OIL PRODUCERS, NOTABLY IRAN,
IRAQ, LIBYA AND ALGERIA, DO NOT HAVE DOLLARS IN EXCESS
AND NEED THEM BOTH FOR DEVELOPMENT AND TO BUY EXPENSIVE WEAPONS FROM RUSSIA.

7. PRO-ISRAELI VIEWS ARE EXPRESSED IN CONSERVATIVE
DERNIERE HEURE: ISRAEL REPRESENTS FIRST-RATE ALLY IN MIDDLE EAST
"WHICH WESTERNERS PARTICULARLY IN EUROPE HAVE DEEPLY NEGLECTED

OF LATE". " UNREALISTIC ATTITUDES OF EUROPEAN LEADERS, THEIR
MISCALCULATIONS,THEIR INNATE PROWERLESSNESS HAVE DONE MORE TO
EXCLUDE THEM FROM THE GENEVA CONFERENCE THAN THE DECISIONS OF
OTHERS".
BOOCHEVER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED USINT CAIRO.

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